



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Washington Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

File Code: 1500/2200-1

Date:

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3405

Dear Senator Dorgan:

Thank you for your letter of August 9, 2005, regarding changes to the Forest Service's rangeland management policies, issued July 19, 2005, as interim directives to the Forest Service grazing permit administration handbook. We also recognized concerns associated with the interim directives and have withdrawn them.

On August 19, 2005, we released for public comment portions of chapters 10 and 20 that are new policy. These portions of chapters 10 and 20, issued now as proposed amendments, will be finalized after public comment is received, analyzed and final directives are issued. These proposed amendments include the following sections:

1. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 10, Section 16.3 – Establishes a new provision explaining contents of notice of non-compliance letter and when it should be issued.
2. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 10, Section 16.4 – Establishes a new provision establishing uniform suspension and cancellation guidelines.
3. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 10, Section 17.1 - Expands the maximum period of non-use for personal convenience from 3 consecutive years to 4 years total.
4. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 20, Section 21.1 - Establishes a consistent process to waive a Forest Service term grazing permit in favor of a grazing association-issued term grazing permit.

5. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 20, Section 21.2 - Establishes a consistent process to waive a grazing association-issued term grazing permit in favor of a Forest Service term grazing permit.
6. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 20, Section 22 - Establishes consistency for grazing agreements on both national grasslands and national forests.
7. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 20, Section 24.11 - Establishes consistent base property ownership requirements for association-issued term grazing permits on national grasslands.
8. Term Grazing Permits, FSH 2209.13, Proposed Amendment Chapter 20, Section 24.12 - Establishes consistent guidelines for share--livestock agreements to satisfy livestock ownership qualification requirements for association-issued term grazing permits on national grasslands.

The remainders of chapters 10 and 20 that do not provide new policy direction are now in place as new interim directives. A notice was published on August 19, 2005, in the Federal Register allowing for a 120-day public comment period on the interim directives and the proposed amendments.

I agree that the provisions regarding base property requirements and share-livestock are both important tools that are essential to keeping ranchers on the landscape. It is, in fact, our intent to retain these policies and improve their effectiveness on the ground. I look forward to working with the grazing community and the public in the development of the final policy.

Again, thank you for your interest in this issue. If I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



DALE N. BOSWORTH
CHIEF

Enclosure